

Speaking Notes for Fran Guerin For Garden City Public Hearing

My name is Frances Guerin. I am an elder of the Musqueam Indian Band. I have my son, Victor, with me and other members of my family. In the traditional way of my people, my son will introduce them in hun'qu'mi'nem and Shane Point will translate into English. First, Victor will offer a short prayer for guidance for you as you do your work this evening.

Victor Guerin will make short prayer and introductions.

Many people wrongly think that the Musqueam are only a Vancouver band and question what we are doing this side of the Fraser. In fact, our traditional territory included Richmond and we still have a small reserve on Sea Island. The Garden City Lands, te maqwum 'i' tutimuxw, are located less than 5 miles away from our Main Winter Village, now the site of our main Reserve. I was myself born and raised at what is now called Steveston after a settler. Our name for the area was Qw'aya'Xw. Our family home was located on land that had been passed on from generation to generation of my family. We were forced to move to the Musqueam main Reserve in 1956 when the Indian Agent of the day threatened to strike our family off the Band membership list if we did not move from our home.

Today is a special day for the Musqueam and, I hope, for the City. It was 3 years ago today that the Garden City MOU was signed by the Band, the City, the Federal Government and Canada Lands. It is a day that is important in Musqueam's history. It marks a turning point in our history since that terrible period when our lands were taken from us by settlers without our consent and without compensation. In the court case and in the MOU, our ownership interest in the Lands was recognized.

We compromised to get to the MOU. But we are a practical people. We know that, to survive as a minority group, we have to share what is rightfully ours. A major compromise was that we gave up our right to control the use of the Lands and agreed to follow Richmond's usual land use regulations.

Like the other members of Musqueam who voted 3 years ago to approve the MOU, I support the MOU. I want a better future for my children and grandchildren. Some people have said that we only want money. It is easy for those with money and land to preach to those without. We live in relative poverty. We need the money from the Garden City Lands to overcome our

poverty. I will not go into the details. They are set out in the Musqueam Community Needs Submission which is tab 4B of the Application for removal of the Lands from the ALR. We have suffered greatly from a 150 years of colonial rule. Our children do not have the same advantages as other Canadians. We are working hard to close the gap through deals like the Garden City agreement with the City. We need to build capacity for a better future. However, as we say at the end of our Community Need Submission:

“Although we are a struggling, deprived community, we maintain our pride, self-respect, and most importantly, our identity as a community and a people. We are proud to be Musqueam.”

People may dismiss our Aboriginal rights and question our motives but that will not stop our resolve to build a better future for ourselves and especially our children and future generations. We too are here to stay where we have always been.

However, we wish to live in peace with our non-Indian neighbours. We have always tried to find ways to do so, to negotiate solutions and not keep going to court to protect our rights. It has not always been easy. We have been ignored; our rights have been dismissed as non-existent or trivial. We were initially ignored when the Federal Government tried to transfer all the Lands to Richmond. We got an injunction to stop the transfer to Canada Lands. We negotiated the MOU to share the Lands. Our interest is now protected by a trust. No matter what some people might want, the Federal Government cannot give the Lands to anyone without our consent.

Defending our rights under the trust and our Aboriginal rights has been described by some people as fear mongering or a threat. I do not understand how defending your legal and constitutional rights can be described in such fashion. It makes no sense.

3 years ago today, we signed the MOU to reconcile our interest in the Land with those of Canada and the City. We want to honour that agreement. We hope the City will join us today in celebrating the third anniversary of the MOU and forward the application to the Agricultural Land Commission.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak this evening. We are pleased with our agreement with the City and what it represents. We hold up our hands to you in the usual Musqueam gesture of respect. - [Hych'qa]